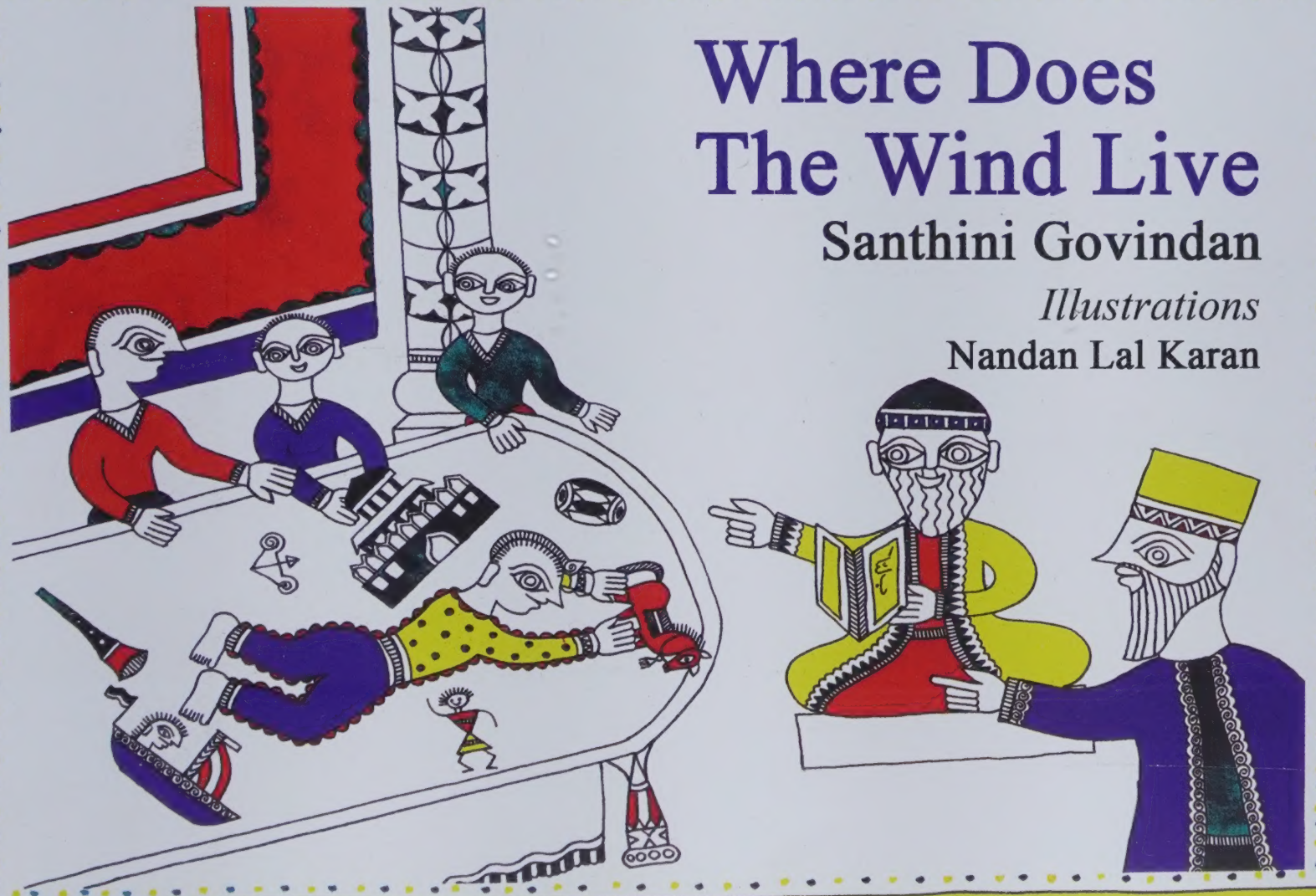
Where Does The Wind Live

Santhini Govindan

Illustrations

Nandan Lal Karan



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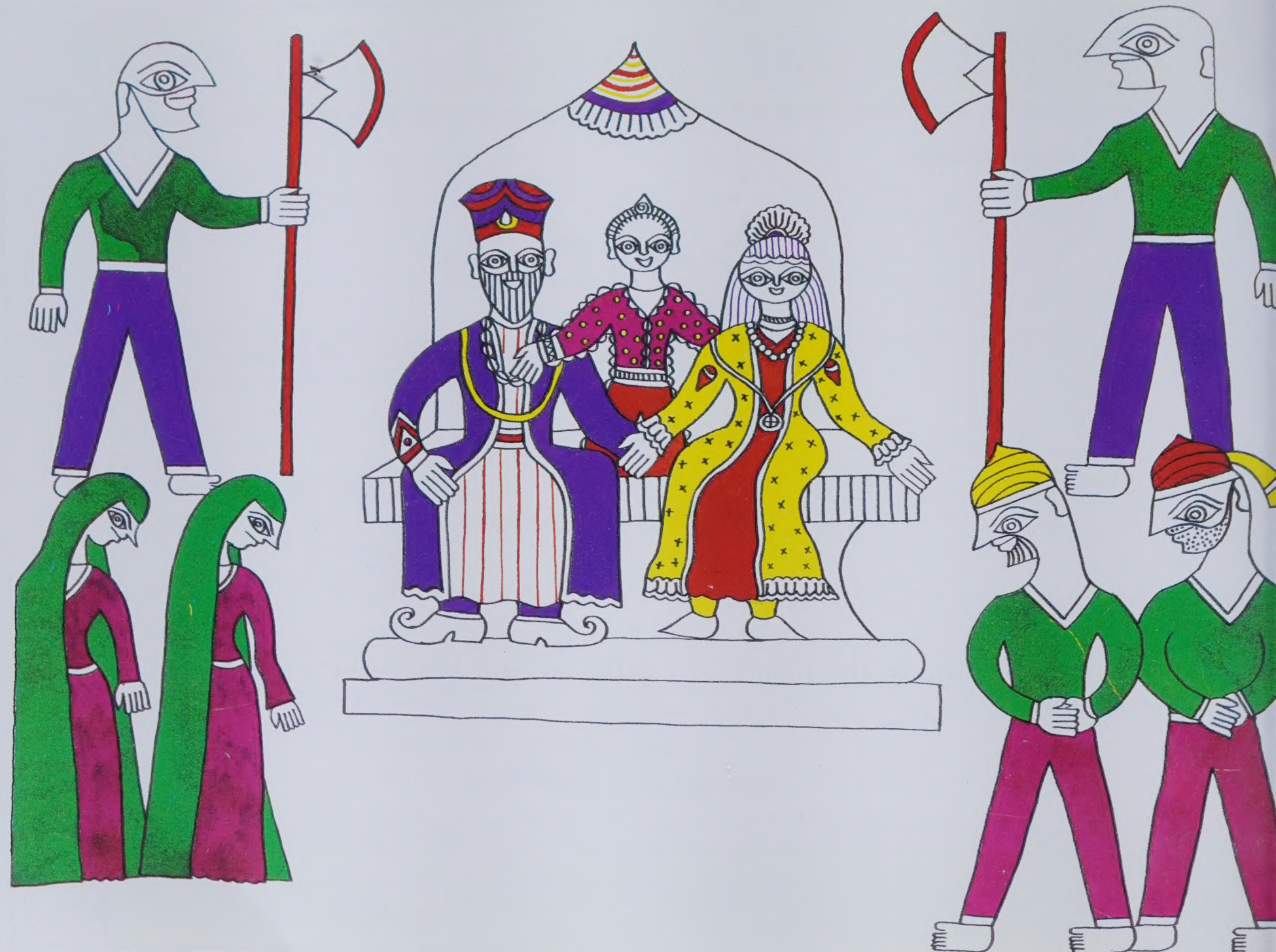

Long, long ago, in a faraway kingdom, there once lived a king and queen in a magnificent palace. They had only one child, a son, Prince Hamid, who was heir to the throne. At the time this story begins, Hamid was ten years old.

Since Hamid was the Crown Prince of the kingdom, his life was different from that of other children. His clothes were made of the softest silks, his turban was studded with fine diamonds and his shoes glittered with precious gems. Hundreds of servants waited upon him: there were servants to dress him, servants to comb his hair and servants to even slip on the richly bejewelled slippers on his royal feet! At each meal Prince Hamid had a choice of dozens of mouth watering delicacies. But often he would push them aside irritably, or spit out the food after only tasting a few mouthfuls. Instead of scolding him, his attendants smiled indulgently.

Prince Hamid did not go to school either, like other children. He had tutors who came to the palace to teach him. But his teachers were never strict with him and, of course, they never, ever dared to scold him. So Prince Hamid studied very little, and spent most of his time playing with his huge collection of expensive toys, or just ran around the many rooms in the palace, looking for new ways to amuse himself.

Now, didn't Prince Hamid have any friends that he could play with, you ask? Well, he did, but they weren't the kind of friends you and I have. His friends were all carefully chosen by his father, the King, and when they came to the royal palace to play with Prince Hamid, they were very subdued and respectful. They only played the games Hamid suggested, according to the rules he made (he had to win every time of course). So it wasn't much fun for them, and they were always glad to go home play with their real friends.

Since Prince Hamid didn't have to prepare for his lessons or do any homework, and as his day had no laid-out routine, he was often very bored. One particular day, he was even more bored than usual. When a huge boxful of new toys arrived after his breakfast, Prince Hamid pushed it aside and, looking sullenly at his long-suffering courtiers, said on a whim, "I'll race you to the top of the palace tower!" And, lifting his silken robes high, Prince Hamid ran up the flight of winding stairs that went up the tower. Immediately all the courtiers followed him, huffing and puffing, panting and sweating. When they reached the top of the tower, Prince Hamid looked triumphantly around: "I won again!" he cried triumphantly.

Then, as he glanced out of the window, his attention was caught by

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a bright pink paper kite with a long yellow tail fluttering in the sky. As Prince Hamid watched fascinated, the beautiful kite danced and swayed with the wind. It glided and spun, twisted and turned and dived in the air as gracefully as a bird.

"What's that wonderful thing?" Prince Hamid asked his courtiers excitedly.

"That's just an ordinary paper kite," replied one of the courtiers. "It probably belongs to one of the urchins who lives near the market square. It's not worthy of our Highness's attention."

"But I like it," said Prince Hamid stubbornly. "I like the way it soars into the sky! Not one of my toys can do that. I want a kite. I want a kite, right now." He stamped his feet and shouted at the courtiers.

The courtiers sighed wearily. They were familiar with Prince Hamid's tantrums. It was clear they were in for another spell of royal rage!

"In fact, I want that very kite that is flying in the sky!" Prince Hamid screamed.

"But..., but," stammered the courtiers, looking helplessly at each other, "we don't know whom the kite belongs to, Your Highness. Nor where the owner's flying it from."

"I DON'T CARE! I want that kite. Go and bring it for me now!" Prince Hamid shrieked, his face purple with rage. "And what's more, also bring the owner of the kite, so that he can help fly the kite from the palace tower. If you don't obey me at once, I shall order that your heads be cut off!"

The courtiers trembled on hearing Prince Hamid's angry words, and hurried to do his bidding. But by the time they had rushed out of the palace gates, the kite was no longer whirling happily in the sky. The courtiers looked everywhere, in every street and lane and on every rooftop, but there was no sign of the lovely pink kite. It had vanished without a trace. As the courtiers were discussing what to do next, they received an urgent summons from the King. He had heard that his son was in a rage, so he was in an even greater rage.

The King roared angrily at his frightened courtiers. "I command you to search every nook and cranny, every house and hut in the town till you find the pink kite with the yellow tail. If you wish to live, do not return to the palace without the kite."

And so, the courtiers went from house to house and, knocking at every door, asked anxiously, "Did anyone here fly a pink kite with a yellow tail this morning?" They threatened and bullied, cajoled and pleaded, but

no one admitted to having seen the pink kite with the yellow tail.

Finally, just as the sun was setting, they arrived the hut of a poor cobbler. When the courtiers peered in through the doorway, they saw the cobbler bent over his work, completely engrossed.

"Has anyone in this house flown a pink kite with a yellow tail this morning?" they asked tiredly, without much hope.

The cobbler looked up with a start, and then, blinked rather nervously. "I think I saw my son making a kite of that description," he replied reluctantly. "But why do you ask? Has he been up to some mischief?"

"Where is your son?" the courtiers asked excitedly, falling over each other as they rushed into the little hut. "And where is the kite?"

When ten-year-old Rashid stood before the courtiers he said proudly, "I made the kite myself. But as it was soaring higher and higher it dipped suddenly and got entangled with the top of a tall coconut palm and was torn to pieces."

The courtiers looked at each other in dismay. The pink kite that Prince Hamid wanted was torn! What were they going to do?

"But I can come to the royal palace and make another kite," offered Rashid.

And that is how Rashid came to the King's magnificent palace and was brought into the presence of the King and Prince Hamid. On seeing Rashid the Prince frowned angrily. "Where's your kite?" he snapped, "I want it."

"My kite got entangled with a coconut palm and was torn," said Rashid apologetically. "But I can make another kite for you, Your Highness. And I promise that it will be bigger, stronger and more beautiful than the one I lost!"

"Agreed," replied the King quickly, before his moody son could utter a word. "Start making the kite immediately."

So Rashid set to work. First he made a light frame with some thin sticks. Then he folded and cut the pink kite paper and carefully stretched it over the frame before gluing it down. He worked through the night and, when the kite was finally ready, Rashid left it to dry, and closed his sleepy eyes.

In the morning, Rashid picked up the new kite and presented it proudly to Prince Hamid.

After many days a smile lit the Prince's face. "That's a lovely kite," he said. Then he added eagerly, "Let's go up to the palace tower and fly it."

"Fly the kite now? We can't do that," said Rashid immediately. "There's no wind today."

"No wind? What do you mean?" asked Prince Hamid sharply a frown beginning to crease his forehead.

"I mean that we can't fly the kite because we need a good, strong wind to lift it up and make it fly," Rashid explained. "And today there's no wind. Haven't you noticed how still it is? Why, even the leaves aren't rustling! We'll just have to wait for the wind to blow before we can fly the kite."

"Wait for the wind? Why should I wait for the wind?" Prince Hamid shouted furiously. "You may wait for the wind, but I am the Crown Prince. I wait for nothing and no one! Everyone does as I command and so will the wind! It must blow when I want it to. I will command it to blow now! Where does the wind live?" he demanded. "Tell me."

Rashid shrank back, his eyes wide with fright. "I don't... don't know, Your Highness," he stammered.

"You don't know? Then what do you know?" Hamid shouted angrily. Then, turning to the courtiers, Prince Hamid asked them where the wind lived. But not one of them could tell Prince Hamid where the wind lived.

As his rage grew, Prince Hamid stamped his feet, rolled on the floor, and threw a mighty tantrum. His angry screams echoed through the great halls of the palace, shaking the chandeliers on the ceilings and the paintings on the walls. Hearing the din, the King and Queen rushed out from their royal apartments.

"Where does the wind live?" they heard Prince Hamid shout with rage. "Are all of you so stupid that not one of you knows even a simple thing like this? Let someone find out at once and go to the wind's home and command it to blow immediately."

The King summoned the wise men of his court. "Where does the wind live?" he asked sharply. "I will send my messengers there to command it to blow with all its might for my son's pleasure!"

The wise men looked at each other. Scratching their heads, they pretended to be lost in thoughts. Not one of them uttered a word.

"Tell me quickly!" the king roared. "Or I'll knock off your heads!"

One wise man spoke up, "Your Majesty, I know where the wind lives. It lives in the desert. Haven't you seen how furiously it blows there, raising vast storms of swirling sand?"

"Go to the desert immediately," the King commanded, "and seek out

the wind. Tell the wind that it is my royal command that it blow whenever Crown Prince Hamid desires." As the wise men hastened out of the room, another one spoke up. "Your Majesty, the wind doesn't live in the desert, it lives on the sea! Haven't you seen how fiercely it blows over the waters, whipping them into mighty waves?"

"Well then, hurry to the sea and seek it out" the King ordered. "When the wind hears of my royal command it will blow for Prince Hamid's pleasure."

As the second wise man withdrew, a third one spoke, "Oh great King!" he cried, "I have actually seen the place where the wind lives! It's on a high mountain top! Drawing its mighty breath it howls and roars, producing blizzards and storms. Shall I go to the wind and tell it of your command?"

The King nodded impatiently and hurried to pacify his son, who was still in a great rage.

"My son," he said soothingly, "I have sent off my wise men to all the places where the wind lives. When the wind hears of my royal command, it will blow at once and you will be able to play with your kite."

Rashid, who had incurred Prince Hamid's displeasure, was dismissed

and sent home. "I hope I never see him again," Rashid murmured as he skipped off happily, greatly relieved to leave the sullen, ill-tempered Prince.

But that was not to be. A week later, at break of dawn, when Rashid was fast sleep, the courtiers banged at the door of his hut again. As Rashid stared at them through sleep-filled eyes, they seized him roughly and dragged him to the door.

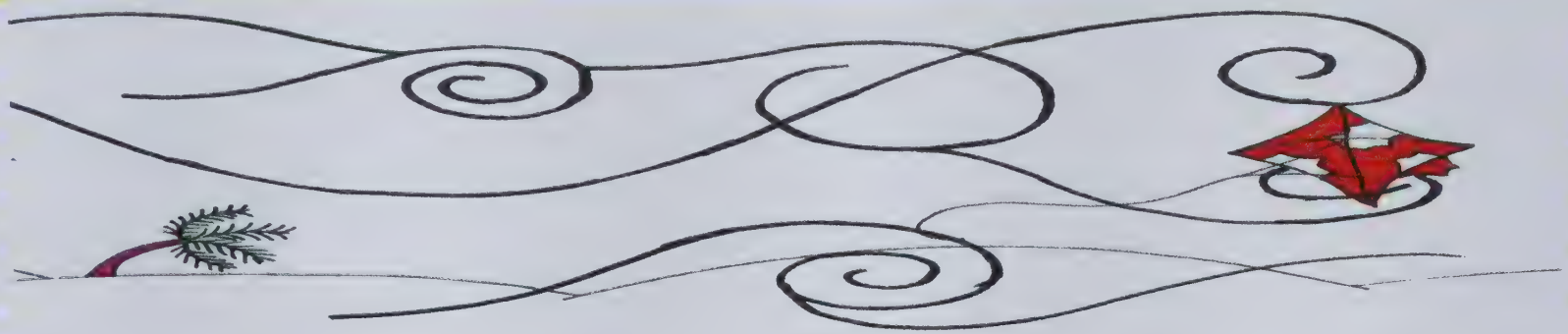
"You have to come to the palace immediately," they said. "Prince Hamid wants to see you."

When they reached the palace, Prince Hamid was pacing up and down impatiently, the pink kite in his hands.

"Look!" he cried triumphantly to Rashid, "Look the wind is blowing! It must have heard my father's command!"

And the wind was indeed blowing. But it was a strong and noisy wind. It tore past the doors and windows of the palace rudely, rattling and slamming the shutters.

"I don't know if we can fly the kite in this wind," Rashid said timidly. "It sounds stormy and angry today. I don't think it will want to play with the kite when it's in this mood. We need to catch the wind when it is happy and gentle..."



"I don't care what mood the wind is in!" Prince Hamid shouted. "Don't forget that I'm the Crown Prince and it has to obey my every command!" He dashed to the top of the palace tower, and Rashid followed unwillingly, clutching the pink kite tightly to his chest.

The wind was howling furiously, tearing the leaves off the trees when the two boys reached the top of the palace tower. It whipped past their faces, and pulled their turbans off their heads!

"Toss the kite into the air," Prince Hamid commanded Rashid. "Let it fly."

"No, the kite will get torn," Rashid pleaded, and hugged the kite even more closely to his chest.

"If you don't let go of the kite, you'll be hurled from here yourself!" Prince Hamid threatened.

So Rashid opened his arms wide. In a split second the raging wind pounced upon the pretty kite and heartlessly tore it to shreds.

"Look what you've done!" Rashid cried accusingly at Prince Hamid with tears in his eyes. "If only you'd listened to me!"

"Why should I listen to you?" Prince Hamid sneered. "The kite you made was no good, and that's why it tore so easily! I will show you that *I* can and will fly a kite in this wind!" He clapped his hands and, as his courtiers came running, Prince Hamid shouted, "Bring me some kites from the market immediately! Bring the best kites you can find!"

Within a few minutes the courtiers returned carrying armfuls of kites. There were square kites, and diamond shaped ones, and kites shaped like lanterns and fish and dragons. The kites were of every possible hue and colour. Rashid looked longingly at them. Then, as the courtiers handed them one by one to Prince Hamid, he tried to toss them into the air. But the wild wind would have none of it! It snatched each kite savagely from Prince Hamid's hand and, before Rashid's horrified eyes, shredded it to pieces. But obstinately, Prince Hamid would not surrender to the might of the wind.

Finally Rashid could bear it no more. "Stop!" he screamed, waving

his arms and he gave Prince Hamid a push. As the Prince staggered back, Rashid shook his fist at him, and stamped his foot angrily. And that wasn't all! As Prince Hamid watched open-mouthed, for once completely at a loss for words, Rashid shrieked, "I don't care if you are the Crown Prince! I think you're just a spoilt, mean boy! And you're stupid too! Everyone knows that the wind is its own master and never obeys anyone—not even kings and princes! You'll never be able to fly a kite when the wind is wild, no matter how hard you try. All you'll do is tear more kites."

Suddenly Rashid's words trailed off, as he realized the enormity of what he had done. Prince Hamid just stood and stared at him. Rashid knew better than to wait for the aftermath of his words. He ran to the door, but just as he crossed the threshold, he glanced back to see if Prince Hamid had ordered his men to go after him. But Prince Hamid was still standing as a statue, surrounded by a sea of tattered kites and Rashid thought he saw tears in his eyes.

That night, as Rashid lay in his bed, he remembered the look of deep sadness he had seen on Prince Hamid's face as he fled from the palace, and he felt very upset. After all, Prince Hamid was just ten years old, like him, and he had been very disappointed at not being able to fly a kite.

Rashid decided that he would try and make it up with the Prince. The very next day he began work on another kite. Using all his skill, and taking great care, Rashid produced the most beautiful kite he had ever made. The kite was pink, blue and white, and had a long, flowing tail. Rashid stuck tiny silver stars upon its face, which shone and twinkled as they caught the sunlight. It took him a whole week, but when it was ready Rashid was satisfied.

On the eighth day after his hasty departure from the palace, Rashid again presented himself at the palace gates, holding his new kite. The guards eyed him with hostility, for even they had heard of his outburst. Although Rashid was quaking with fear, he announced boldly, "I have come to see Prince Hamid. I have a present for him."

Rashid was ushered into Prince Hamid's presence once more. The Prince looked warily at Rashid. He did not speak.

Rashid bowed low. "Your Highness," he said, "I have made a beautiful new kite for you, and I thought that we could fly it today. You see, the wind is blowing again, but this time it's a happy wind.... Listen, he added, "can you hear the wind. It's whistling and singing in the trees and dancing with their leaves."

Prince Hamid jumped up, his eyes filled with excitement. In a moment, the two boys had run up to the palace tower.

Rashid tossed the new kite into the air. The wind immediately enfolded it in its arms, and lifted it up gently. Slowly, the kite began to rise, its tail fluttering happily. And as Prince Hamid and Rashid watched, the cheerful wind played with the kite, making it bob and sway. The kite then soared triumphantly towards the fluffy, white clouds, and Rashid handed its string to Prince Hamid. The Prince laughed joyfully as the kite rose quickly and surely till it was just a little dot in the sky.

Prince Hamid turned to Rashid. "You are a real friend," he said. "Only you dared to tell me the truth! And you are wise too. I was foolish to ask where the wind lives and to think that the wind would blow according to my father's commands. When I grow up and become King, you shall be my advisor. But until then..." he looked at Rashid with sparkling eyes, "we will both wait for the wind to blow!"

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Shri Nandan Lal Karan (b.1977), *Madhubani Painter*

The Artist: Shri Karan, a young Madhubani painter in his early twenties, belongs to a family long associated with this unique art of the Mithila region of Bihar. A graduate in commerce from University of Delhi with a Two Year Course in Art and book Illustration from Children's Book Trust, Shri Karan has shown tremendous potential in making use of traditional art. Learning the art from his parents and grandparents, themselves established names in the field, with his grandmother smt. Jagdamba Devi, being a recipient of the prestigious Padmashree Award, Shri Karan has participated in many workshops including one held in Germany and organised by Bal Bhawan, New Delhi.

The Art: Traditionally, the art of Madhubani or Mithila painting has been the domain of the womenfolk of the Mithila region, who decorated the walls of their houses with these painting on festive occasions. The themes are generally drawn from Ramayana and Mahabharat and also from the local cultural ethos with drawings of Krishna and Radha occupying a special place. Many pictures express the richness of nature and the need to preserve the environment. Colors used are generally made of leaves, flower, henna dung and other organic materials. The traditions is to use only fallen flowers and leaves so as not to pluck them from a branch. Modern generation artists also use water colours and do their work on new materials like fabric and hand made paper.

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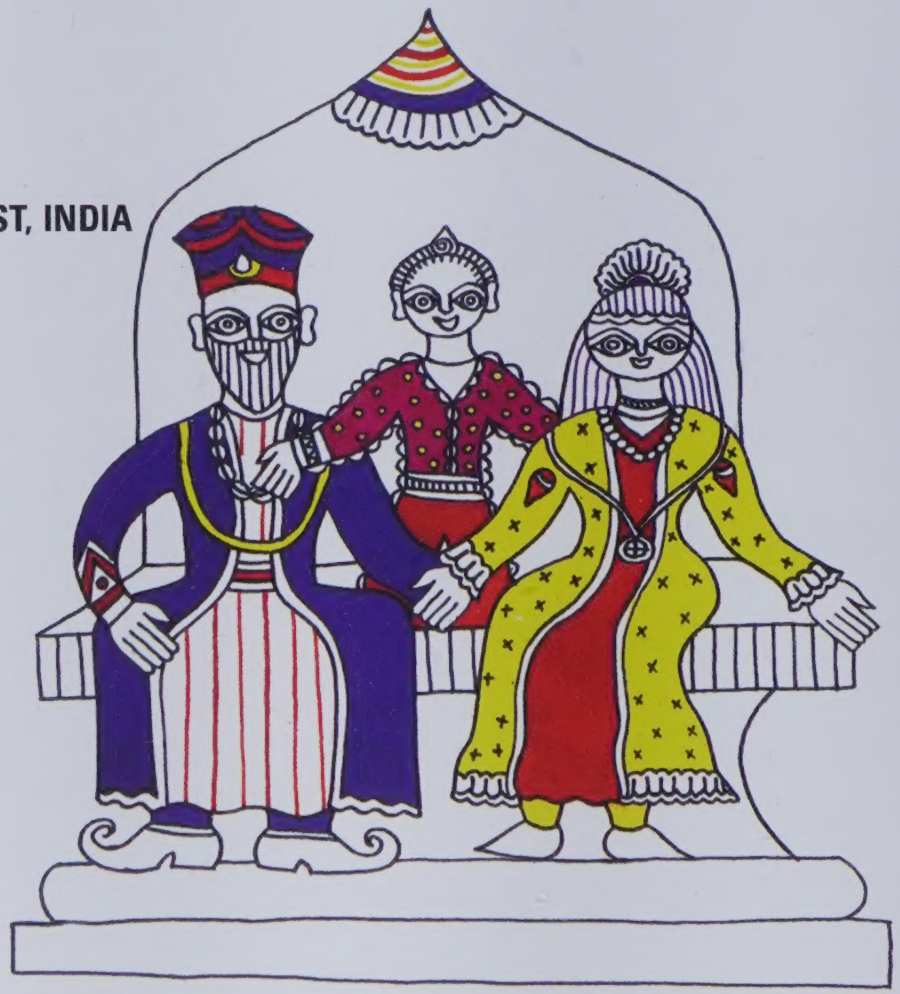

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